

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
SB 312 – PROHIBITING ECONOMIC CREDENTIALING.

By Jim M. McLean, PT, DPT, CSCS, JD

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My name is Jim McLean, and I am a Doctor of Physical Therapy. I own a small, private clinic in Frenchtown, Montana. Today I am representing the Montana Physical Therapy Association, which has over 400 members in the state of Montana.

I believe that the patient's best healthcare and financial interests should always be our highest goals, especially when it is time to make a medical referral. These goals should not be influenced by hidden financial gains of hospitals, physicians, or any other party.

Defeating this bill will give a green light to all hospital in Montana to use economic credentialing. This, in turn, will decrease competition, and drive up healthcare costs statewide.

Patients may go directly to a physical therapist, but most start physical therapy with a referral from their physician. If a local hospital uses economic credentialing, the referring physician may be required to refer to the hospital. This referral may be made without considering that a privately owned physical therapy clinic may also provide quality care, but also have longer hours to accommodate patient schedules, newer equipment, or be 30 miles closer to the patient. Most patients assume the physician is looking out for the patient's best interests. Patients rarely question whether their physician has a financial conflict of interest.

Passing this bill will increase healthy competition, and will encourage referring physicians to make referrals for the patients' best interests. I encourage this committee to oppose conflicts of interest in healthcare, and to support SB 312.

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